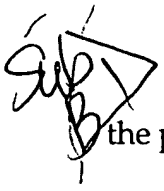


ABSTRACT

 An apparatus having a pipeline having a series of stages. At least one of the pipeline stages has a first interface for coupling to a memory that stores input capacity information for a packet. The input capacity information is obtainable from the packet's packet header information. At least one of the pipeline stages has a second interface that receives packet size information, a third interface that receives the input capacity information and comparison logic coupled to the second and third interfaces.

A method that involves presenting packet header information and packet size information to one or more pipeline stages where the packet header information and the packet size information correspond to a packet. Then, determining within a stage associated with the pipeline, with the packet header information, input capacity for the packet. Then, comparing within a stage associated with the pipeline, the input capacity with the packet size. Then, indicating from a stage associated with the pipeline whether the packet is conforming or non-conforming based upon the comparison.